Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 103728
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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO USMISSION USBERLIN

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 103728

FOLLOWING TELEGRAM FROM MOSCOW DATED APRIL 21, 1978 SENT SECSTATE WASHDC, SEOUL, TOKYO, LENINGRAD, LONDON, MONTREAL, DIA WASHDC, HELSINKI IS REPEATED TO YOU: QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 08555

MONTREAL FOR ICAO

E.O.11652:GDS
TAGS:EAIR, CASC, UR
SUBJECT:MISSING SOUTH KOREAN AIRLINER

REF: (A) MOSCOW 8511, (B) SEOUL 3341 (ALL NOTAL)

SUMMARY: MFA OFFICIAL KAPITSA CALLED IN DCM AT 1345 ZULU TO HAND OVER NON-PAPER ON DOWNED KOREAN AIRLINER. NON-PAPER STATES THAT PLANE LANDED ON LAKE IN VICINITY OF KEM IN KARELIAN ASSR AFTER FLYING OVER SOVIET AIRSPACE FOR TWO HOURS. PASSENGERS AND CREW MAY BE REPATRIATED FROM MURMANSK BY AMERICAN CIVIL AIRCRAFT. HOWEVER, NO AMERICANS WERE ON BOARD. IN RESPONSE TO DCM'S QUESTIONS, KAPITSA SAID THAT THERE WERE TWO DEAD WHEN PLANE LANDED ON
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 STATE 103728

ICE AND THIRTEEN PERSONS TEMPORARILY HOSPITALIZED. HE COULD NOT PROVIDE NAMES OR NATIONALITIES OF DEAD. ONLY TWO OF THOSE TAKEN TO HOSPITAL ARE REGARDED AS INJURED, AND ALL MAY BE REPATRIATED. SOVIETS REFUSED TO CONSIDER PERMITTING KOREAN AIRPLANE TO FWY TO MURMANSK TO MAKE THIS PICK UP. DCM'S REFERENCE TO POSSIBILITY OF USING AIRLINES OF OTHER THIRD PARTIES MET WITH UNFORTHCOMING RESPONSE. LOCAL PAN

Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014

Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014

AMERICAN REPRESENTATIVE IS ABSENT FROM MOSCOW. WE SUGGEST THAT SOUTH KOREAN AIRLINE SEEK TO CHARTER AVAILABLE AMERICAN AIRCRAFT TO FLY SURVIVORS FROM MURMANSK TO HELSINKI. END SUMMARY.

1. EMBASSY ROUGH TRANSLATION OF NON-PAPER FOLLOWS:
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-- DURING THE NIGHT OF APRIL 20-21 AN AIRCRAFT OF UNKNOWN REGISTRY VIOLATED THE AIRSPACE OF THE USSR FROM THE DIRECTION OF THE BARENTS SEA IN A REGION NORTHEAST OF MURMANSK AND, CONTINUING ITS FLIGHT IN A SOUTHERLY DIRECTION, PENETRATED DEEP INTO THE TERRITORY OF THE USSR.

-- PVO FIGHTERS WHICH INTERCEPTED THE INTRUDING AIRCRAFT DURING NIGHTTIME GAVE REPEATED COMMANDS BY AIRCRAFT MANEUVERS AND FLARES TO FOLLOW THEM FOR LANDING AT NEARBY AIRPORTS, BUT THE AIRCRAFT DID NOT ACCEPT THESE COMMANDS AND MADE A LANDING ON A LAKE IN THE KEM' DISTRICT OF THE KARELIAN ASSR A FULL TWO HOURS AFTER ITS INCURSION INTO THE AIRSPACE OF THE SOVIET UNION.

-- AFTER THE LANDING, IT WAS ESTABLISHED THAT THE AIRCRAFT WHICH COMMITTED THE VIOLATION WAS A BOEING 707 BELONGING TO THE SOUTH KOREAN AIRLINE.

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 STATE 103728

-- AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE CAUSES OF THE VIOLATION OF THE.. AIRSPACE OF THE SOVIET UNION IS BEING CONDUCTED BY SOVIET COMPETENT ORGANS.

-- THE PASSENGERS AND CREW OF THE AIRCRAFT HAVE BEEN TRANSPORTED TO A NEARBY SETTLEMENT, AND MEASURES ARE BEING TAKEN FOR THEIR TRANSPORT (OTPRAVKA) FROM THE TERRITORY OF THE USSR.
-- THE USSR MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION WILL TRANSPORT THE PASSENGERS TO MURMANSK, WHERE THE AMERICAN SIDE CAN SEND A CIVIL AIRCRAFT FOR THEM. TECHNICAL DETAILS MUST BE ARRANGED WITH THE CENTRAL DISPATCHER SERVICE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (TEL. 155-54-12).

2. DCM ASKED WHETHER ALL THE PASSENGERS AND CREW WERE SAFE. KAPITSA REPLIED THAT AS A RESULT OF THE ROUGH LANDING, AT WHICH TIME THE LANDING GEAR COLLAPSED AND THE AIRCRAFT SUSTAINED OTHER DAMAGE, FOUR PASSENGERS WERE INJURED, TWO OF WHOM DIED. (SUBSEQUENTLY HE SAID THAT 13 HAD IN FACT BEEN TREATED FOR INJURIES, BUT THAT INJURIES WERE NEGLIGIBLE WITH 11.) NEITHER THE NAMES NOR NATIONALITY OF THE DEAD AND INJURED ARE AVAILABLE AT THIS

Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014

Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014

TIME, HE SAID, BUT SO FAR AS HE WAS AWARE NO AMERICAN CITIZENS WERE ABOARD.

3. DCM NOTED THE OFFER TO ALLOW AN AMERICAN CIVIL AIRCRAFT TO PICK UP THE PASSENGERS IN MURMANSK, AND ASKED WHETHER IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE FOR A SOUTH KOREAN AIRCRAFT TO DO SO. KAPITSA'S ANSWER WAS A FLAT "NO," AND HE COMMENTED SUBSEQUENTLY, "WE DO NOT WISH TO DEAL WITH THE SOUTH KOREANS IN ANY FASHION IN THIS MATTER." DCM ALSO INQUIRED WHETHER AN AIRCRAFT OF JAPANESE OR OTHER NON-U.S. REGISTRY WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE, AND KAPITSA SAID THAT THE OFFER IS FOR AN AMERICAN AIRCRAFT, AND THAT THIS OFFER IS BEING MADE IN LIGHT OF THE INTEREST WE HAD SHOWN IN THE MATTER. REPLYING TO A SUBSEQUENT QUESTION, HE SAID THAT CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 STATE 103728

MILITARY AIRCRAFT COULD NOT BE USED.

4. DCM REFERRED TO PRESS REPORTS THAT SOVIET FIGHTERS HAD FIRED UPON THE AIRCRAFT AND ASKED WHETHER THIS HAD IN FACT HAPPENED. KAPITSA AVOIDED A DIRECT REPLY, STATED THAT SOVIET FIGHTERS INTERCEPTED THE AIRCRAFT WITHIN SOVIET AIRSPACE, GAVE REPEATED SIGNALS TO THE CREW WHICH WERE IGNORED, AND THAT THE CAUSES OF THE INTRUSION WERE BEING INVESTIGATED.

5. REGARDING THE PERSONS WHO COULD BE PICKED UP IN MURMANSK, KAPITSA SAID THAT CREW AS WELL AS PASSENGERS ARE INCLUDED IN OFFER, AND THAT THE TWO INJURED PASSENGERS ARE IN A CONDITION TO TRAVEL AND COULD BE MOVED.

6. COMMEMT: ALTHOUGH KAPITSA DID NOT TOTALLY EXCLUDE THE POSSIBILITY OF USING AIRCRAFT OF NON-U.S. REGISTRY (OTHER THAN SOUTH KOREAN), IT WOULD SEEM THAT THE MOST RAPID WAY TO EFFECT EVACUATION OF PASSENGERS FROM MURMANSK WOULD BE BY USE OF U.S. CIVIL AIRCRAFT (PERHAPS ON CHARTER TO KAL) TO FLY PASSENGERS AND CREW FROM MURMANSK TO HELSINKI. REQUEST DEPARTMENT'S REACTION AND INSTRUCTIONS FOR ARRANGEMENTS DESIRED.

7. WE ARE RECEIVING NUMEROUS PRESS INQUIRIES ABOUT STATUS OF CASE. UNLESS DEPARTMENT ADVISES TO CONTRARY, WE WILL BEGIN INFORMING THEM OF FOREGOING INFORMATION AS OF 1700Z. ASSUME DEPARTMENT HAS NO OBJECTION TO OUR BRIEFING JAPANESE EMBASSY. TOOM, UNQUOTE CHRISTOPHER

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Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014

Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014

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Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014

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EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
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